

# CONNECTICUT

## Land Conservation Council

Testimony in Support of Bill No. 6262 and Bill No. 6263  
Presented by Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director  
Environment Committee - March 7, 2011

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and Members of the Environment Committee:

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) joins a statewide coalition of organizations in strongly supporting **Bill No. 6262, AA Concerning the Community Investment Account (CIA)** and **Bill No. 6263, AA Concerning the Transition from the Ten Mill Program**. CLCC works with land trusts, town conservation and open space commissions, garden clubs and others to help ensure the protection of Connecticut's natural resources. We provide training, technical assistance and funding to ensure the long term strength and viability of the land trust and conservation community across the state. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of our members.

**Bill No. 6262:** Enacted with tremendous bipartisan support in 2005, the CIA provides increased funding for state programs for open space, farmland, historic properties and affordable housing projects as well as for important municipal capital improvement initiatives. Two years ago, the General Assembly and Governor Rell passed legislation to expand the CIA to provide two years of funding for a dairy safety net paid when federal prices fall below the cost of production. Bill 6262 would remove the sunset provision and ensure that this critical assistance to the dairy industry would be continued.

Funded by a surcharge on recording fees, the impact of the CIA on the economic well-being and overall quality of life in our communities has exceeded all expectations. According to the latest figures compiled by a statewide coalition of open space, farmland, affordable housing and historic preservation groups - the CIA has provided funding for over 562 projects in 145 towns, including at least 26 of the state's 32 Distressed and Targeted Investment municipalities, and has been used to leverage significant match dollars by and for these communities. Overall, 200% in matching funds from private, federal and local sources have been raised to match the state's CIA dollars – funds which have been invested directly back into our communities to support CIA funded projects.

The CIA also funds and creates a need for jobs including at least 14 staff positions at the state agencies that administer these programs. In the private sector, CIA projects have created approximately 2,000 jobs since 2006 in the affordable housing and historic preservation sectors – ranging from construction contractors to jobs in the tourism industry. The \$873 million outdoor recreation industry and the \$3.5 billion dollar agricultural industry, which together generate 28,000 jobs, are strengthened by CIA investments to local farm businesses and land protection.

In short, CIA funded projects not only make our towns more attractive for people to live and for businesses to operate but they contribute significantly to our state's economy. We respectfully request that you support Bill 6262 and the CIA to continue these critical investments into our state's economy.

**Bill No. 6263:** Landowners in the 10 Mill program made a 100-year commitment to protecting their forest lands – with the original incentive being that their property taxes would be kept at the 10 mill rate. However, on the 50-year anniversary of being in the program these property taxes are likely to increase dramatically if both the standing timber and property are re-assessed and taxed based upon their current “developable” values. Bill 6263 provides a common-sense compromise by: 1) making it easier for landowners to maintain their long-term commitment to forest conservation by capping their property taxes at the P.A. 490 rate upon their 50-year anniversary in the 10 Mill program, and 2) providing 10 Mill landowners who are willing to place a conservation easement on their properties with the flexibility to keep their lands in 10 Mill or transition into P.A. 490 without a financial penalty.